IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-22 without prejudice or disclaimer, and substitute new claims 23-44 therefor as follows:

Claims 1-22 (Cancelled).

23. (New) A method for providing to software applications access to web services, comprising the steps of:

providing a Parlay gateway permitting access to web services, said Parlay gateway comprising a Parlay framework; and

providing a set of modules comprising service interfaces for said software applications, the modules in said set acting as proxies in order to perform requests for access to web services on the framework of said Parlay gateway on behalf of said software applications.

24. (New) The method of claim 23, comprising the step of configuring the modules in said set for performing authentication, authorization, and execution requests on said Parlay gateway on behalf of said software applications.

25. (New) The method of claim 23, comprising the step of providing a further set of modules configured for implementing the behaviour of said web services once said requests on said Parlay framework of said Parlay gateway have been performed on behalf of said software applications by the modules in said set.

26. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein said web services are Parlay X web services.

27. (New) The method of claim 23, comprising the step of defining at least one web service security protocol for ensuring secure interaction between said software applications and the modules in said set.

28. (New) The method of claim 23, comprising the step of providing a distributed processing mechanism enabling said modules in said set to interact with said Parlay framework in said Parlay gateway via said distributed processing mechanism.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, wherein said distributed processing mechanism is CORBA.

30. (New) The method of claim 25, comprising the step of providing a respective distributed processing mechanism enabling said modules in said further set to interact with said Parlay framework in said Parlay gateway via said respective distributed processing mechanism.

31. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein said respective distributed processing mechanism is CORBA.

32. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the step of one of said software applications accessing a web service comprising the steps of:

said software application subscribing a module in said further set corresponding to said web service; and

configuring the service properties of said subscribed module in said further set, wherein both said operations are performed by using the tools provided by said Parlay framework in said Parlay gateway.

33. (New) A system for providing to software applications access to web services, comprising:

a Parlay gateway permitting access to web services, said Parlay gateway comprising a Parlay framework; and

a set of modules comprising service interfaces for said software applications, the modules in said set being configured for acting as proxies in order to perform requests for access to web services on the framework of said Parlay gateway on behalf of said software applications.

34. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein the modules in said set are configured for performing authentication, authorization, and execution requests on said Parlay gateway on behalf of said software applications.

35. (New) The system of claim 33, comprising a further set of modules configured for implementing the behaviour of said web services once said requests on said Parlay framework of said Parlay gateway have been performed on behalf of said software applications by the modules in said set.

36. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said web services are Parlay X web services.

37. (New) The system of claim 33, comprising at least one web service security protocol for ensuring secure interaction between said software applications and the modules in said set.

38. (New) The system of claim 33, comprising a distributed processing mechanism enabling said modules in said set to interact with said Parlay framework in said Parlay gateway via said distributed processing mechanism.

39. (New) The system of claim 38, wherein said distributed processing mechanism is CORBA.

40. (New) The system of claim 35, comprising a respective distributed processing mechanism enabling said modules in said further set to interact with said Parlay framework in said Parlay gateway via said respective distributed processing mechanism.

41. (New) The system of claim 40, wherein said respective distributed processing mechanism is CORBA.

42. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein the modules in said further set are configured for permitting said software applications to access a web by the steps of:

said software application subscribing a module in said further set corresponding to said web service; and

the service properties of said subscribed module being configured in said further set, wherein both said operations are performed by using the tools provided by said Parlay framework in said Parlay gateway.

43. (New) A communication network comprising the system of claim 33.

44. (New) A computer program product loadable in the memory of at least one computer and comprising software portions capable of performing the method of any of one of claims 23 to 32.